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Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski teaches at the University of Dayton's Institute for Pastoral Initiatives.

## Globalization in the classroom

*Tensions over raising ethical questions in a complex subject*

By RENÉE LaREAU

Fairfield (Conn.) University communications scholar Robbin Crabtree wants her students to feel pain. Yes, that's right. Pain. In her undergraduate course titled "Globalization, Media and Culture," Crabtree explores communication with an international focus, analyzing the digital divide from the perspective of women in developing Asian nations, exploring traditions in African cinema, and describing the cultural risks of the

increasing conglomeration of American media. "When you study this stuff it should hurt," Crabtree tells her students. "It should hurt your head intellectually, and it should break your heart."

For Crabtree, a course covering the globalization of media means asking tough ethical questions about the information gap between rich and poor nations. "You must look at it from the perspective of those who are most marginalized," she said.

Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart Sr. Angela Ann Zukowski, director of the Institute for Pastoral Initiatives at the University of Dayton in Ohio, agrees. "You have to be aware of how globalization is perceived in other parts of the world," Zukowski said. "You can say we're all working so we can become one, but for some nations that is a form of cultural oppression."

Many scholars in Catholic college and university classrooms, like Crabtree and Zukowski, are willing to examine globalization through the lens of justice. Still, the sheer magnitude of the topic, divergent views of professors' ethical responsibilities, and a clash between Catholic social teaching and economic theory result in an uneven handling of some of the critical questions related to globalization: Are free markets fair markets? Does globalization mean that everyone on the planet will eventually live in a McWorld? Are developing nations being exploited for the economic gains of others? Whether these questions are being asked varies not only from campus to campus, but from classroom to classroom.

Crabtree witnessed this unevenness firsthand in a comment from one of the students in her course. "This student, who was a marketing major, said to me: 'I've taken 13 business classes, and this is the first time I've heard any of this. We've never talked about labor, environment or the Third World.' I was just shocked," Crabtree said. "It could be the luck of the draw because I know faculty who do talk about these things, but I had not looked at the business environment in general."

For Crabtree, who is not Catholic and has "had no Catholic education whatsoever," looking at globalization without the lens of justice or a Jesuit perspective is unimaginable. "I can't imagine an argument against discussing the ethical dimensions of anything under any circumstances, let alone in the

context of higher education in a democracy, and at a Jesuit university at that,” she said.

### **‘A work in progress’**

Holy Cross Fr. Oliver Williams, associate professor of management and academic director of the Center for Ethics and Religious Values in Business at the University of Notre Dame, acknowledges that for business faculty, establishing a comfort level with ethical questions can be a challenge. “It’s a work in progress,” he said. “There are some who are naturally interested, and they are fairly good at it, but there are some, many in finance or accountancy who are experts in their field, who are not comfortable raising issues in the classroom of something they are not experts in.”

Patrick Murphy, professor of marketing at Notre Dame and director of the university’s Institute for Ethical Business Worldwide, agrees that a lack of familiarity with the vocabulary of ethics and time management challenges are obstacles to raising justice-related questions in business schools. “Time and comfort level are the two primary impediments,” Murphy said. “You use words like utilitarianism or virtue ethics, and they are foreign terms to a number of business faculty. For some people there is a tension. We can only cover so many things in our courses and ethics gets left out. There is a significant majority that thinks these are issues we should discuss, but it’s not unanimous.”

Georgetown University professor of sociology and anthropology William McDonald, whose primary research area is immigration and crime, shies away from broaching ethical questions in sociology courses. “I’m not an ethicist. I’m a sociologist,” McDonald said. “In a social science, you are not supposed to be doing ethics. People in the theology departments do ethics. It can be a diversion or discussion, but that is not what we are trained and paid to teach.” McDonald said the only time he would consider teaching about immigration through the lens of ethics is in a course he teaches through Georgetown’s program of liberal studies. “It is a strictly value-oriented program that is attuned to value kinds of questions,” McDonald said. “In that course, I would have no problem with ethical questions, but you wouldn’t find them in any properly run sociology program.”

Because a discussion of globalization often draws faculty members out of their academic research areas, many experts advocate an interdisciplinary approach. Such is the view of James Buchanan, director of the Edward B. Brueggeman Center for Dialogue at Xavier University, Cincinnati. “The globalization courses we teach here are multidisciplinary,” he said. “They are very hard to teach because we are always out of our depth. You really have to dialogue with economists to learn the language of deficits, mobility of capital or cultural imperialism.” Buchanan, a comparative religions scholar, advocates a team approach to teaching about globalization. “One person can’t handle this,” Buchanan said. “Nobody can be an expert in all of these things.” Buchanan co-teaches a course titled “Globalization: An Interdisciplinary Exploration,” along with Xavier faculty from the economics, political science, and theology departments. The course is cross-listed in each of these departments, as well as in environmental studies.

Jesuit Fr. Paul Locatelli, president of the University of Santa Clara in California, which houses an Institute on Globalization, is another advocate for an interdisciplinary approach. “The largest questions on globalization and justice are at the intersections of disciplines, not in one discipline,” Locatelli said. “The best thing to do is to set up interdisciplinary centers.”

Though some might see globalization as an issue encompassing only business-related topics like market forces or management, Locatelli said that the humanities and liberal arts are better situated to ask justice-related questions when it comes to globalization. “They are able to raise much broader questions,” he said. “Liberal arts can raise the whole issue of human rights, human dignity, and respect

for the poor and the understanding of the idea of the common good, which the market orientation does not address.”

### **The human cost**

Katrin Sieg, a Georgetown University associate professor of German who also teaches in Georgetown’s Walsh School of Foreign Service, agrees that the humanities offer a valuable perspective. “In the humanities there is a lot more willingness to entertain the human cost of globalization,” she said. “When you look only at the economic issues there is an assumption of a beneficial trickle-down effect to remote places on the earth by putting our money there,” she said. “But within the humanities there is both a sense of the doubts and suspicions of the neoliberal ideology. Humanities looks more at the level of the individual and makes connections with very abstract forces.”

One of Sieg’s research interests is the feminist critique of globalization, which few scholars have entertained thus far. “There is oodles and oodles of globalization theory, and only a small subset of it addresses gender because it contradicts some of those neoliberal myths of the trickle-down,” she said. “Yes, some women have benefited, but in some ways, the traditionally female tasks of domestic and caring labor have been transposed to women in Third World countries who come over here to work as nannies, maids and sex workers.”

Sieg acknowledges that her research, which demands an understanding not only of German but of sociology and economics, has required some extra effort. “I really had to educate myself in a lot of other disciplines before I felt comfortable thinking about these things,” she said. “In German studies in the U.S. not many people work on globalization because it exceeds the traditional boundaries of the profession.”

Sieg’s willingness to critique the popular neoliberal view of globalization, which prizes maximum reliance on the market with minimal state regulation, speaks to a tension that surfaces for those who view globalization through the lens of justice. “There is always a tension when you speak about educating for solidarity, particularly with neoliberal economists,” said Locatelli. “Neoliberal economists lack the perspective that poor people are not able to participate in the market because, a priori being poor, they are excluded. Anyone who approaches globalization exclusively from the market perspective will disagree with the person who asks the ethical questions.”

Xavier’s Buchanan said that the tensions between neoliberal economics and the values prized by Catholic social teaching are alive and well in Xavier’s team-taught course on globalization. “Those very tensions and many others are clearly present in the class and that is exactly as it should be,” Buchanan said. “Helping the student understand and struggle with these tensions in a critically informed way and letting them see the faculty caught up in the same tensions and struggles is really what the course is about.”

The thorny ethical questions embedded in a complex reality like globalization will continue to demand resourcefulness, collaboration and risk-taking by faculty at Catholic colleges and universities. And a little humor and concrete imagery can’t hurt. “Globalization doesn’t mean that we all wear jeans,” Zukowski tells her students. “It should make us ask the question, hey wait a minute, why didn’t the sari catch on all over the world?”

Renée LaReau is the author of *Getting a Life: How to Find Your True Vocation* (Orbis). She writes from Columbus, Ohio.

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